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DC COUNCIL APPROVES TRUNKED SYSTEM

But is it too little, too late for the FCC?

by Vince Destajo (vdestajo@npr.org) and Alan Henney (henney@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu)

On December 17 the District council approved emergency legislation and allocated $5.9 million to build a trunked radio system for the Department of Fire and EMS. Assuming the system is built, an additional $1 million will come from lease payments from the department's budget during the next five years.

The fire department says the upgrades are badly needed. "As you know," wrote Mayor Marion Barry in a letter to Councilman David Clarke, "the [fire] department's current radio system uses outdated technology, has separate frequencies for fire and EMS, and has dead spots throughout the District. This modern system will correct those deficiencies, allow our public safety forces to use advances in communications technology, and permit inter-operability with other District radio systems and surrounding jurisdictions."

"If the District does not show progress in constructing this system during the 1997 calendar year," Barry warned, "we are likely to loose our 800 MHz frequencies. A signed contract is just the progress that we need."

But time may have already run out. A trunked system (KNJU834) and three conventional channels (KNJE616) licensed to the city expired last summer when the Federal Communications Commission refused to grant the city a third license extension. Montgomery County and other jurisdictions have petitioned the commission for these 18 channels.

The fire department's currently used eight 800 MHz channels (KNJA391) were licensed in 1986 and were later re-licensed as a trunked system which technically expired on Dec. 31, 1996. The department filed for an extension to build its trunked system on these channels in October and the application is pending.

Several council members criticized Mayor Marion Barry for submitting a no-bid contract to the council at the last minute, the Dec. 22 Washington Post stated, "even though the fire department had been asking for the upgrade for years and another company said it could provide the same service for $1.6 million less." The contract includes 250 mobile and 310 hand-held radios.

Instead of going through routine purchasing procedures, the District "piggy-backed" its purchase contract on Fairfax County's cooperative buying agreement. The agreement between Fairfax County and Motorola allows other jurisdictions to purchase similar equipment under the terms negotiated by Fairfax County for its proposed trunked system. Fairfax County's contract requires the trunked system to meet the functional requirements established by the Associated Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) Project 16.

Project 16 is a standard for public safety radio systems which has been surpassed by newer APCO standards but remains popular. In addition to Project 16, the system must also meet, but not fully comply with, the intent of the newer APCO Project 25 in terms of spectrum efficiency, digital modulation, support for multiple suppliers, enhanced audio quality and support for advance applications technology.

The city's decision to join the purchasing agreement has eliminated competitive bids from other potential vendors such as General Electric.

The fire department, according to the city's Department of Administrative Services, has "attempted on several occasions to purchase via competitive sealed proposals a District-wide 800 MHz radio system. On the most recent two occasions the solicitations have been canceled, once for excessive pricing and once for the tremendous amount of delay that was caused by the inability of the District to accurately compile a technical specification that could be advertised and evaluated without numerous amendments being issued."

The fate of the fire department's communications system is now in the hands of the FCC. The commission could rule in favor of the District and allow the fire department to retain its existing eight channels for the proposed 800 MHz trunked system. Or, the FCC could rescind the fire department's 800 MHz channel assignments. According to the city administrator's office, the fire department would then have to grab any

city-licensed frequency available to continue operation.

Insiders at the FCC indicate that the District could conceivably not receive commission approval. The commission has stated that no further extensions will be considered. Because of the scarcity of 800 MHz channel assignments in this region, several other jurisdictions, such as Montgomery County, either want or have been waiting for these frequencies.

Licenses in question:

KNJA391: The District's fire department originally licensed these eight channels for conventional use and re-licensed them for the proposed trunked system. The license expired on Dec. 31, 1996, but the fire department hopes the FCC will renew them for use with the proposed trunked system. They are still used conventionally.
852.6125, 852.6375, 852.6625,
852.6875, 852.7125, 852.7375,
852.7625, 852.7875

KNJE616/KNJU834: The Office of Emergency Preparedness licensed these 15 trunked channels and three conventional channels. This was to be the District's primary radio system. Both licenses expired during the summer of 1995 and the FCC granted two six-month extensions which have also expired. The District has probably lost these channels for good.
Conventional:
855.2125, 855.2375 855.4625
Trunked:
856.2375, 856.7375, 856.9875,
857.2375, 857.7375, 857.9875,
858.2375, 858.7375, 858.9875,
859.2375, 859.7375, 859.9875,
860.2375 860.7375 860.9875

NPSPAC: These five channels were allocated to the District's fire department by the Region 20 National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee. Frequencies in this band are densely packed and must operate at lower power levels to accommodate nearby users and thus require more antenna sites. 866.275, 866.7, 866.725, 866.95 and 866.975

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STATUS OF OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY TRUNKED SYSTEMS

In January Carroll County started using its 800 MHz trunked system. Ron Chalk and Kevin Strack say the trunk will officially go on-line during March and is expected to include most county agencies. It's an analog Motorola Type II system. Frequencies are:
867.1375 867.1875 867.225
867.3875 867.4250 867.45
867.475 867.5875 867.9375.
Inputs are the usual 45 MHz lower.

The Baltimore City Fire Department continues to progress with its digital trunked system which is expected to be operational sometime this summer, report Charles Hutchinson and Shane Pule. The department is installing new base stations in firehouses. Vehicles will be outfitted with status message encoders and automatic vehicle locators that determine the unit's location using tower triangulation (rather than GPS). Battalion chiefs will receive Firesoft software.

Baltimore's $75 million project is being undertaken in phases, with fire, police and public works each migrating to the system independently. Tower work continues and fiber optic cable is being laid. The fire and police communications centers will ultimately operate from the fourth floor of police headquarters with the new communications system.

Meanwhile, Montgomery County is still working on specifications for its proposed digital trunked system. The proposal is expected out between April and July of this year. From that point, it will probably take between 18 months and two years before county agencies start migrating to the system.

In Prince George's County local government radio users in a couple of years may make the switch to an 800 MHz trunked system. The county set aside $750,000 to buy the police new UHF radios. But the plan is for the police and fire to join other county agencies on the trunked system in four to five years. But with the repeal of TRIM, the county may not have the funds needed to build a trunked system in the foreseeable future. The county is reportedly considering a General Electric trunked system.

The Fairfax City Police Department, Ken Fowler reports, will spend $450,000 this year on radios that will operate on the county's 800 MHz digital trunked system. The city's fire department is already part of the county's current UHF system so it will switch automatically with the other county fire stations.

On Feb. 1 the State of Delaware began testing the first phase of its digital Motorola 800 MHz trunked system in New Castle County. The test, says Trooper Benjamin Miller, will run through April and include pilot users from state and county police and volunteer fire and EMS agencies. The system will be fully implemented incrementally in New Castle County after April, 1997 through the summer. The system will eventually include all state radio users and most county and municipal agencies who choose to join.

Some Delaware state police patrol cars are equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers. When a trooper files a report from an accident scene, the GPS coordinates are automatically recorded. The state police currently have eight patrol vehicles equipped with laptops and 40 more are expected this summer.

In Pennsylvania, the governor recently approved a multi-million dollar communications upgrade which includes an 800 MHz Motorola digital trunked radio system that will be implemented over the next four to five years. All state agencies are expected to use the system.

UNIDEN OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCES ITS TRUNKTRACKER

After months of rumors, Uniden announced its two TrunkTracker scanners at the Consumer Electronics Show in January. When the radios come out later this year, they will be the first commercially available scanners capable of tracking conversations on Motorola Type I, II and IIi trunked systems. The radio "scans" only one trunked system at a time but offers several useful features. A handheld and desktop model will be similar in design to the 220 and 890. Check the March "Monitoring Times" or February "National Scanning Magazine" for a review and more details or http://www.grove.net/trunktrackersmt.html

While on the topic of new scanners, John Scott says Relm, formerly Regency Electronics, is once again in the scanner business. Relm introduced the HS200, a handheld scanner that features a built-in CTCSS and DCS decoder. On the HS200 webpage (http://206.1.57.20/Scanns/hs200.htm) it's advertised as having "direct cellular entry."

CONGRESS REVISITS SCANNER RADIOS

by Bennett Z. Kobb
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The House Telecommunications Subcommittee took the gloves off Feb. 5 in an intense --and even hysterical --hearing on radio scanners. The subcommittee is looking into updating the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) and the 1993 Telephone Disclosure and Dispute Resolution Act (TDDRA) to tighten the noose on those who would monitor the 800 MHz radio band for cellular telephones.

Veteran radio magazine publisher and equipment dealer Bob Grove was vilified by subcommittee members and virtually crucified by trade association executives. Grove's company, Grove Enterprises (a SpectrumGuide dealer), sells shortwave and scanner radios and has apparently performed modifications to scanners to restore frequency bands deleted by the manufacturer.

The most astonishing moment for this writer came when one association executive stated that his goal was to ban reception of "all frequencies, all radio services," a ludicrous proposal. He specifically mentioned wireless LANs and satellites along with PCS, cellular and Specialized Mobile Radio as services that must be protected against what he termed "electronic stalkers."

The cold wind has already started to blow. Scanner supplier Ace Communications was hit the next day with a $20,000 FCC fine. The company allegedly flouted the FCC's requirement that only Commission-authorized products may be marketed.

Bob Grove's testimony is available from http://www.grove.net/ecpa.html and Grove's review of the Newt Gingrich cellular-phone flap is at: http://www.grove.net/newtcellphone.html. Also visit the New Signals Press at: http://home.navisoft.com/nspi/what.htm

PG POLICE PROPOSE CHANGES

A study is under way in Prince George's County to make either another station or sector in the county's southern end. It would cover parts of Fort Washington and Clinton and would, tentatively, be called the "W" sector. Part of the problem is monetary, which may determine if the department adds a new station, or just another sector to District 5. The "W" sector would consist of part of the "J" and "F" sectors. No time frame has been set, but it's being looked at and researched. Check out the department's website at: http://www.co.pg.md.us/pgpolice.htm

USAIR ARENA UPDATE

With his Scout and AR8000 in tow, John McCann attended a Caps game at the USAir Arena. He found the security on 151.895, parking attendants on 151.865 and what might most accurately be called guest services on 154.57. The Scout also logged hits on 464.875 and 466.8375, but John was unable to identify the users. The Maryland-National Capital Park Police also perform crowd control for large events at the arena (try 159.27). We thank John for taking time to share his findings.

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT

Long-time spot news photographer and CHM member Steve Eisen, with the help- of several anonymous colleagues, has completed a narrated 130-picture book entitled "Trauma Code." Steve and his friends, who monitor scanners and respond to fire and crime scenes, warn that this book is a graphic photo collection.

Steve says it's a tribute to what rescue workers face while on the job. The book includes sections on accidents (plane, train and car), drownings, murders and other tragedies. Many incidents featured are from this area and range from the 1950's to the present. The book sells for $24.95. For details call Steve at 301-933-6804.

FOR SALE

Stan Wharton is selling a 14-channel VHF Bendix-King handheld transceiver with convertacom, charger and new battery pack. Call Stan for details at 301-946-7471.

NEWSSCAN

BUGS IN NFL HELMET RADIOS. A few bugs are still being worked out in the second year of the NFL telecommunications system that links quarterbacks to a sidelines coach and indirectly to the offensive coordinator in the coaches' booth upstairs, reported the Nov. 28 San Francisco Chronicle.

Problems range from the inability of the coach to tell the quarterback everything in the time allowed, to bad stadium wiring, to failure to replace the nine-volt battery during halftime. The NFL requires the messages to be scrambled using what sounds like rolling-code inversion scrambling. Every team has its own frequency. But another problem is that the frequencies used are 12.5 KHz "splinter channels" from the 461-470 MHz business band, which means that other radio users, like stadium concessionaires, can potentially end up on or near the team's frequency.

The system has two distinct parts: The first is a telephone hookup between the offensive coordinator in the press box and quarterback coach on the sidelines. This is under the control of the team. The second part is a one-way radio link between the quarterback coach and the quarterback. This hookup, first installed around the league last season, is managed by an NFL official sitting in the press box much like the old instant-replay official. One hobbyist noted that the conversations are brief, so you must be persistent when searching during football games.

TRUNKING STANDARDS COMPETE FOR EUROPEAN DOMINANCE. Since March, the Island of Jersey, a part of the Channel Islands, has been testing a new digital system called Dimetra, Digital Motorola European Trunked Radio, which Motorola launched during November. "The launch," says the Nov. 15 Financial Times, "is a big step forwards for the digital systems, as Dimetra is the first range to conform to the so-called Tetra (trans-European trunked radio) standard, which is in the final stages of approval by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute."

The Dimetra range will begin its "phased roll-out" next summer, but Motorola will not have the market to itself. Other companies, including Nokia of Finland, are likely to introduce Tetra-based products. And with the launch of Dimetra, the gloves are off in a bitter turf war between supporters of Tetra and proponents of Tetrapol. This is a rival digital system championed by France's Matra Communications and is already on sale. The two systems can work together, but only on a limited basis, which will disappoint authorities battling cross-border crime.

The new digital systems have been developed because of a general recognition that conventional cellular networks could not meet all the needs of security forces, emergency services, and civilian users such as bus operators. Users will be able to connect equipment such as barcode scanners and video cameras to their mobiles. Police forces get special emergency buttons on their portables and their radio messages encrypted.

Tetra uses a process known as Time Division Multiple Access, in which several simultaneous calls are each given a time slot within one 25KHz-wide radio channel. In contrast, the Tetrapol system and a US standard called APCO 25 which uses Frequency Division Multiple Access in which each call occupies a narrower, 10KHz or 12.5KHz, chunk of frequency.

Motorola says the time division process is more flexible due to the wider bandwidth, and says the batteries in the portables last longer. Also, it says, duplex conversations are more difficult on a frequency division system. Supporters of Tetrapol say the system is better suited for large networks with few users, because FDMA reduces the number of required base stations.

Tetrapol already has 13 principal customers in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, including the French gendarmerie's Rubis network and the French national police's fledgling Acropol network.

WIRELESS WORLD OF CHAOS. Clashes among wireless devices have occurred for decades, the Nov. 11 Orange County Register observed, but some fear that with the explosion of wireless communications the problem is destined to get worse. Interference complaints include a baby monitor that interfered with communications on a U.S. Air Force base, an energy-efficient light that disrupted AM radio signals, and an electric cash register that may have interfered with a pilot's communication system.

But they get worse: A breathing machine for infants shut down when a worker turned on a cell phone, a motorized wheelchair careened out of control because of interference from a nearby radio station, gauges on a child's ventilator went haywire when a parent used a cellular phone, a pacemaker failed during an ambulance ride when a two-way radio was in use, and a fetal heartbeat detector picked up local radio and CB broadcasts.

Complaints about electronic devices aren't new. For decades, long before cell phones were ubiquitous, the FCC received thousands of complaints each year about police dispatches infiltrating church broadcast systems and ham radio operators in-

terrupting a neighbor's TV reception. Many consumers don't understand that the faulty device often is not the transmitter but the receiver. TV sets, hearing aids, church speaker systems pick up unwanted signals because they often are not properly insulated.

NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE CENTER. The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) is the nation's logistical support center for wildfire suppression. The center is a combination of seven federal agencies. When wildfires start, local firefighters provide the first line of defense. If they can't contain the blaze, they immediately seek help from their nearest fire coordination center. In the meantime, the fire is reported to NIFC to assess the fire and send any help requested.

According to the Nov. 10 Chicago Tribune, wildfire information and requests for help come to NIFC's National Incident Command Center, a war room, so to speak, that not only tracks fires, but also can mobilize firefighting crews, smokejumpers, management teams, airplanes and the myriad pieces of equipment needed to fight the fires. On the 52-acre NIFC lie nondescript buildings and warehouses, each supporting essential elements of this firefighting support group.

One building houses the National Incident Radio Support Cache, which maintains the nation's largest radio inventory --6,500 hand-held radios, along with supporting equipment, such as satellite equipment and cellular phones, enough to support 45 major wildfires at one time. The radios also are available for use at other national and international incidents --earthquakes, hurricanes and search-and-rescue missions such as the Oklahoma City bombing.

CABLE CHANNELS SIMULCAST POLICE/FIRE BROADCASTS. In October, Greensboro's [NC] government access cable channel started playing police communications while the city's information bulletin board scrolls the screen. The Winston-Salem's government access channel, says the Nov. 10 News & Record, has been broadcasting its police communications for seven years.

It's such a popular channel that more than 6,000 people have written the station requesting copies of the 10-codes and police officers even carry extra copies so they are prepared when citizens ask for them. Some citizens are so tuned in to the channel that they have called police with tips about incidents they have monitored. Locally, Prince George's County cable channel 29-B, at least in the southern part of the county, is the Public Safety Channel. During breaks in programming, it simulcasts the county's fire radio dispatches.

AFFORDABLE WIRELESS DATA COMES TO D.C. Recently you may have noticed shoe-box-sized whitish boxes attached near the top of street lamps in the District and suburban Maryland. The boxes, actually radio transceivers, belong to Metricom Inc., a Los Gatos, Calif., company that launched a wireless Internet access service in November in the Washington area called Ricochet. Its service here is part of a joint venture with PepData Inc., an unregulated affiliate of the Potomac Electric Power Co.

Washington Post reporter Mike Mills says Ricochet is the newest player in a growing new market for wireless Internet access. Others include Motorola Inc.'s Ardis, AT&T Wireless and Ram Mobile Data (a joint venture between BellSouth Corp. and Ram Broadcasting Corp.).

Ricochet, unlike its competitors, is aiming at the local businessperson or student who moves around town, but rarely out of town. For $29.95 a month, plus a $10 monthly modem rental fee (or a one-time modem purchase of $299) and a $45 one-time activation fee, customers get an e-mail address, Netscape Navigator Web browser software and unlimited access to the Internet at 28.8 kilobits per second, the speed of today's traditional modems. Coverage includes all of the District and parts of Montgomery County with plans for expansion into parts of Prince George's County and isolated pockets of Northern Virginia, where transmitters hang on private buildings.

Unlike cellular or paging services, Metricom doesn't need any expensive radio licenses to operate Ricochet. It uses unlicensed frequencies in the 900 MHz band that also are used by baby monitors, cordless phones and garage-door openers. To avoid interference Ricochet uses a "frequency hopping" technology that transfers packets of digital information in bursts across 162 frequency channels, with no single packet spending more than 400 millionths of a second on any one frequency. The hopping also helps make the network secure from eavesdroppers.

The shoe-box-sized radio transmitter -receivers cost the company about $1,000 each to install on a lamppost or utility pole. These microcells are placed in a checkerboard pattern across the city roughly a quarter-mile to a half-mile apart, drawing only a small amount of power from the lamppost. Within every 20-mile radius, containing roughly 100 microcells, Ricochet has installed what it calls "wired access points," which collect and convert the radio signals into data sent over land-based fiber-optic lines using standard Internet protocols.

In another Washington Post article, Rajiv Chandrasekaran noted that area businesses and schools have been trying out a system that beams data from the Internet to their computers using high-frequency radio waves at speeds of about 10 million bits per second. The radio wave pilot project, which has been operating since early summer, is run by CAI Wireless Systems Inc. in Albany, N.Y., and Hybrid Networks Inc. in Cupertino, Calif. Hybrid plans

to offer commercial service in the area by the middle of this year.

Microwave signals are beamed from a television tower owned by American University. The receivers must "see" the transmitter. The radio transmitters only send data "downstream," so people must use a standard phone line connection to ask for the information on the Internet or to send electronic mail.

SCANNER LISTENER TO MONITOR TRUNKED SYSTEM. A Tampa scanner hobbyist, says the Feb. 1 Tampa Tribune, has convinced the Hillsborough County [FL] Sheriff's Office to "program the public's scanners to pick up the new transmissions, just as it has offered for local media outlets" when the sheriff's office switches to its "new trunked and scrambled radio system this summer."

FINGERPRINTING CELLPHONES? Every radio transmitter has its own unique characteristics, or "fingerprint," says the Nov. 27 San Francisco Chronicle. And some cellular companies can now match the fingerprint of each caller against its phone number and block the call if the two don't match. Radio frequency fingerprinting was first devised by the U.S. military for intelligence purposes. The equipment, which costs as much as $35,000 per cell site, has reduced the amount of fraud for a Chicago cellular company by 75 percent. A Boston consulting firm estimates that U.S. cellular companies lose $2 million every day because of callers who use bogus numbers and identities.

EVEN WORSE THAN CABLE THEFT?? "It's very serious. We're talking about violating someone's privacy," said a spokesman for Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association in reference to people monitoring cellular telephone calls. "But people listening to scanner chatter aren't necessarily eavesdropping," the Nov. 17 Sunday Gazette Mail stated....

"According to the 4th Judicial District Attorney's Office in Colorado Springs, hearing such conversations isn't illegal because listeners aren't intentionally trying to violate someone's privacy." Digital cellular will make those conversations more secure, but industry officials admit that wireless conversations will never be 100 percent confidential. "Privacy can't be guaranteed," warns a U.S. West spokesman. "Bottom line --you never know who may be listening."

MAN SUES CORDLESS PHONE MANUFACTURER. "The only analogy I can draw is, I guess that must be what it feels like to be raped," said a guest on the Nov. 26 Good Morning America show in regard to having his cordless telephone conversations monitored by his neighbor. He didn't know it at the time, Bill Ritter reported, but while he used his cordless telephone, he says his neighbors monitored his phone calls with a radio scanner. "One day, an individual that I didn't know came up to me and said, 'We're listening to your phone conversations, and you're the laughingstock of the neighborhood.'"

Bell South, the makers of the cordless phone, stated in the manual that "You can feel secure that nobody will intercept conversations between the handset and base unit." The report indicated that the man was so humiliated that he put his house up for sale and also filed suit against Bell South, which made the phone as well as Wal-Mart who sold him the unit. Bob Grove warned the viewers that on a low-cost cordless telephone, there is no such thing as confidentiality. For security Grove recommends the more expensive 900 MHz digital phones.

BAD PRESS FROM BAD PRESS? "It's easy for 'radio freaks' to listen to your cordless or cellular telephone conversations," warned reporter Doug Stanley in the Jan. 1 Tampa Tribune. Stanley featured a 512-word interview with a "freak" who identified himself as "Poster Child," who "eavesdrops for profit, snatching credit card numbers from the airwaves and using them to buy electronic goodies such as CD players and videocameras."

A NEWSSCAN SPECIAL --THE PHONE CALL HEARD AROUND THE WORLD.

On Jan. 10 the New York Times printed a transcript of Newt Gingrich's cellular call that touched off a blizzard of media coverage of the scanner world. After reading a couple hundred articles, here are our favorite picks:

WORDS OF ADVICE FROM THE JAN. 31 DAYTON DAILY NEWS: "One refreshingly straightforward suggestion has emerged from the charges and counter-charges surrounding House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia and Rep. Jim McDermott: Go immediately to your cellular phone and paint on it, 'It's a radio, stupid.'"

"In a recent law-journal article," the Dayton Daily News continued, "Carol Bast of the University of Central Florida argues it is irrational to provide broad legal protection to cordless-and cellular-phone conversations if they're not protected technologically. In other words, says Bast, the onus should be placed on the phone user --not the snooper --to secure that conversation." But a former chair of the American Bar Association's Forum on Communications Law argues that cellular phone users have a reasonable "expectation of privacy" that should be legally protected.

YES, THEY DO EXIST. Cell phone conversations, warned the Jan. 26 Rocky Mountain News, are sometimes listened to on police scanners and other devices by what Tim Ayers of the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association calls a "bizarre group" of people who have their own magazine and Internet site. "If you want more than a couple of seconds, you have to make a real effort," Ayers was quoted saying in the Associated Press on Jan. 10.

FIGURE THIS ONE OUT! Gingrich continues to use an analog cellular phone even after a Florida couple used a police scanner to listen in on the conference call, noted the Jan. 25 Gannett News Service. "It's the top of the line" of analog cell phones and is considered more secure against eavesdroppers than the standard cell phone, spokesman Lauren Maddox said.... "Probably the most often said thing in Washington for two weeks after that [the Gingrich call] was 'I'll get back to you on a land line,'" joked Rep. Sam Gejdenson.

ANOTHER MONDAY MORNING QUARTERBACK? David Danisar, staff attorney for the Electronic Privacy Information Center, said if Congress really wanted cell phone calls to be secure, it would have passed legislation that required phone companies to make encryption a standard feature. Instead, lawmakers approved legislation that makes it a crime to intentionally listen in on cell phone calls or to repeat the contents of those conversations. Danisar noted in the Jan. 25 Gannett News Service that digital cell phones are more secure but he is skeptical of claims by companies like Sprint Spectrum that their phones are totally secure.

MORE LATE ADVICE. "Maybe John Martin should have spent his birthday money on lottery tickets instead of buying that new police scanner at Radio Shack," writes Joe Frolik in the Jan. 10 Plain Dealer.

ANYBODY KNOW ABOUT THIS? "I think cellular phones are different because there's no wires connected to them. And I think that their --the Supreme Court has held --I'm pretty sure the Supreme Court has held, and I know if I'm wrong I'm going to hear about it from you and everybody else --that there is no expectations of privacy on cellular phone because everybody can listen to you. It's kind of like a police scanner. So I don't think we're going to see anybody prosecuted for this," said CNN Burden of Proof Host Roger Cossack on Jan. 10.

IT'S A FIRST AMENDMENT ISSUE! "I wanted to add a personal perspective to the [Gingrich phone] issue," writes Rowland Nethaway, senior editor of the Waco [Texas] Tribune-Herald. "Overlooked, I thought, was the fact that cellular phone conversations have always been broadcast clear and unscrambled on radio frequencies that can be picked up legally and listened to legally on legal receivers, such as police scanners."

"Over the years," Nethaway continues, "police officials have occasionally attempted to get laws passed to make it illegal for citizens to listen to police scanners. These efforts become problematic in a free society. They raise the specter of repressive regimes that attempt to control what their citizens hear or view on the airwaves, read in print or say in public."

"Rather than invest in better technology to solve its privacy problem," Nethaway notes, "in 1993 the cellular industry successfully lobbied Congress to pass a law that makes it illegal to manufacture scanners that can pick up the clear broadcasts of cell phones. That left millions of legal scanners still out there, plus a confusing legal mess. The angry reaction to my [last] column makes me believe that lots of Americans have been misled about the privacy of their cellular phone conversations. Congress should have required the cellular industry to fully reveal this fact to its customers."

"Unless you happen to pick up Speaker Gingrich and his buddies planning to manipulate the media and stick it to the Democrats" while you scan phone calls, Nethaway said, "most telephone conversations between men are boring.... Except for high-ranking Republicans," Nethaway added, "most people know their conversations over cordless phones in homes and analog cellular telephones are broadcast over public airways where they can be heard. The solution to cellular-telephone privacy should come from technology, such as digital cellular phones, not more criminal laws."

Please address all correspondence to Alan. We encourage readers to submit material and to write articles which relate to the hobby. All submissions are subject to editing for both style and content. When submitting material please make certain we have your phone number should we have any questions. We welcome frequency and visitor requests, but please include a SASE.

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The Capitol Hill Monitor is the non-profit monthly newsletter of the *Capitol Hill Monitors*. The newsletter keeps scanner enthusiasts abreast of local meetings, frequency profiles and other topics of interest. Dues are $10 and include 12 issues (back issues cost $1 each). Kindly make checks payable to Alan Henney. Membership will be prorated accordingly in the event of a postage increase.

Meeting Coordinators:
Mike Peyton, Maryland Coordinator (703-749-7379)
Ken Fowler, Virginia Coordinator (703-385-2165)

Frequency Forum Computer Bulletin Board:
We encourage computer users to log onto Jack Anderson's Frequency Forum computer BBS at 703-207-9622 (8-N-1). Frequency Forum is the official electronic gathering place for readers of the Capitol Hill Monitor!

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